

Father and Son Run Around the World

By Arthur Gailles

In 1997, Gordon Borkat offered his son Jarrod and his then-girlfriend Angie an all-expenses-paid trip to new Zealand, Osaka, and Mount Fuji – with one condition: Jarrod and Angie had to run a marathon with him. Little did Jarrod know that he had just begun an adventure of a lifetime.

Jarrod, who is the Vice Chair of the KCA Board of Trustees, had always enjoyed 10-kilometer races with his father. Their runs together were a way for the two to spend time together, even though Jarrod “didn’t like running.” So when Gordon heard about the Millennium Marathon, he knew he needed an added incentive to bring his son along.

“In new Zealand, the sun rises before everywhere else in the world. So [the Millennium Marathon] was the first major sporting event of the new millennium.” It was far too much for Jarrod to pass up. “I had to think about it for all of half a second.”

Three years passed, and this time, it was Jarrod who would call his father with his own position. “I thought it would be kind of cool if we could run a marathon on every continent.”

So together, they laid out a plan, but with a twist. After a second marathon in Hawaii, Jarrod began planning their Marathons with one question in mind: “What is the coolest thing we can do on every continent?”

With that question in mind, the Borkats continued in pursuit of their goal. In 2004, The Borkat duo ran through the Kenyan Safari, an effort that was not without its hazards. The marathon organizers had to fly a helicopter and an airplane over the runners to keep lions at bay. Still, the trip was far from uneventful; Jarrod remembers seeing zebras, elephants and monkeys on his Safari run. But the sights weren’t all he remembers. “One guy had to lapped by three of the Kenyans,” Jarrod says with a chuckle. “One guy had to

be going at least twice as fast as I was – and he had already run an extra 13 miles!”

“The Wall” is a famous concept among marathon runners: a mental hurdle that runners commonly struggle with around the 20th mile of the race. Jarrod’s 20th mile in Beijing marked his toughest moment as a runner: scaling the Great Wall of China. “not only did I hit a wall mentally, but I hit the Great Wall, and I could hardly climb it.” But Jarrod persevered through the challenge, calling it “literally, the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life.”

But Jarrod and Angie (now his wife) don’t cite the Great Wall, the Kenyan Safari, or even the beaches of Normandy, France as their favorite marathon. That honor goes to an unlikely continent.

“you can’t convey the feeling,” Jarrod says of Antarctica. “Imagine living in a black and white world: everything you see is black and white. Except for these bright blue glaciers. Or imagine going through an oasis.” Thinking of Antarctica, Jarrod falls silent for a moment, trying to find words to encapsulate how different the barren continent was from anything he’d ever experienced. “I’ve never experienced terrain like that. I felt like I was on the moon. you knew you were in a different world.”

Jarrod’s most lasting memory of his favorite continent wasn’t the scenery or the terrain. “The highlight of the whole thing was probably at mile five when a penguin crossed my path. I stopped. you never get this experience. Here I am, standing in Antarctica, and I run into a penguin walking seven or eight feet in front of me. So I stopped, took pictures and enjoyed the moment, and then I kept going.”

After finishing his tour through all the continents in Rio de Janeiro, Jarrod is hanging up his running shoes – at least, for now. Though he’s finished with his own marathon, he’s left the window open for his daughters, Ella and Olivia. “I told my girls, if you choose to run a marathon, I will pay for your trip anywhere in the world.”

In this respect, at least, it’s like father, like daughter. “They both said they want to go to Antarctica to see penguins.”



Gordon, Angie and Jarrod prepare for a marathon in Antarctica.



Jarrod and his father both received medals commemorating their marathons in each continent. Jarrod calls the medal his “most prized possession.”